

THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER
LETTERS

Modern English

Sir. — A letter published in your esteemed daily on October 15 about the questions of English for B.A. (pass) Exam. 1983 attracted my attention. It was demanded in that letter that the appropriate preposition after the verb 'fill' be in and not up, though used by the question setter in his question 'Fill up the blanks'. What is apparently incorrect as per age-old worn-out classical grammar is absolutely correct as per usage and modern grammar; e.g. (1) 'Due to' is not a preposition. 'Due' is a predicative adjective followed by 'to' — His absence was due to illness. But the pair is freely used as a prepositional phrase by all people and authors alike in sentences like 'He was absent due to illness; food supplies fell short due to over-growth of population.' (2) In comparative degrees 'than' is necessarily conjunctive world — e.g. 'You are cleverer than he'. But only when the person or the thing compared happens to be the subjective complement 'than' is heard and read as preposition colloquially as well as literarily from most corners of the English-speaking world — e.g. 'Your are cleverer than him; He is happier than me. A stone is heavy and the sand is weighty but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both (Bible)'. (3) It is laid down in the classical grammar that the objective case and the prepositional case of the interrogative pronoun 'who' is 'whom' e.g. 'Whom do you want? Whom did you go to?' But the modern grammar has replaced 'whom' by 'who' e.g. 'who' can be used all alike as a nominative as an objective and as a prepositional case. e.g. 'Who broke my pencil? Who do you want? Who did you go to?' In exceptional circumstances this replacement has been extended to the non-defining relative pronoun as well (4) Due to constant disuse of the preposition 'to' following the adjective nearest, next and opposite these adjectives have been converted into prepositions e.g. 'The hunter went nearest the forest; He sits next me; Her residence is opposite the factory'. (5) A so-called grammar book dictates that a verbal noun is formed by adding '-ing' to the

stem to be followed by 'or' and preceded by 'the'. But in numerous cases the '-ing' verb is not found preceded by 'the', e.g. He acquired knowledge by reading of books. (6) An old grammar book lays down that the following verbs be followed by their gerund, but in higher studies these verbs as well as similar other verbs are found followed by their infinitives, e.g. Aim at doing — Aim to do; Chance of winning — Chance to win; Think of doing — Think to do. (7) If the two tenses of a compound sentence are unambiguously defined by inserting 'after' or 'before' the stereotyped past perfect tense need not be exhibited by introducing 'had'. The sentences like the following are absolutely correct: I reached the station after the train started. I reached the station before the train started. Numerous examples can be cited in order to prove that age-old grammatical rules are in most cases contrary to modern usage and modern grammar.

I shall conclude my letter by resuming my original topic on 'fill up the blanks'. In the light of the foregoing elucidations one ought to remain respectfully content that (1) the question had been set necessarily by a learned professor, a departmental authority ripe with age and knowledge; (2) the pair 'fill up' is used everywhere by everybody and, finally (3) the learned author Prof. Md Irshad-ullah Head of the Department of English, Chittagong College, has himself used the pair 'fill up' in his renowned book 'A text book of higher English Grammar' in exercises including the exercise following chapter XXVI for appropriate preposition 'Fill in is very seldom heard and read.'

References: 1) Living English Structure by W.S. Allen; 2) A Grammar of English Words, by Palmer; 3) Pocket Oxford Dictionary; 4) A.B.C. of English Usage; 5) Notes on learning English by Flood West — Yours etc. MD. KHAYERUZZAMAN S.A.S. Superintendent Office A.G. (W) 40 Kakrail, Dhaka-2.